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The President's Daily Brief

January 15, 1976

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Top Secret 25X1



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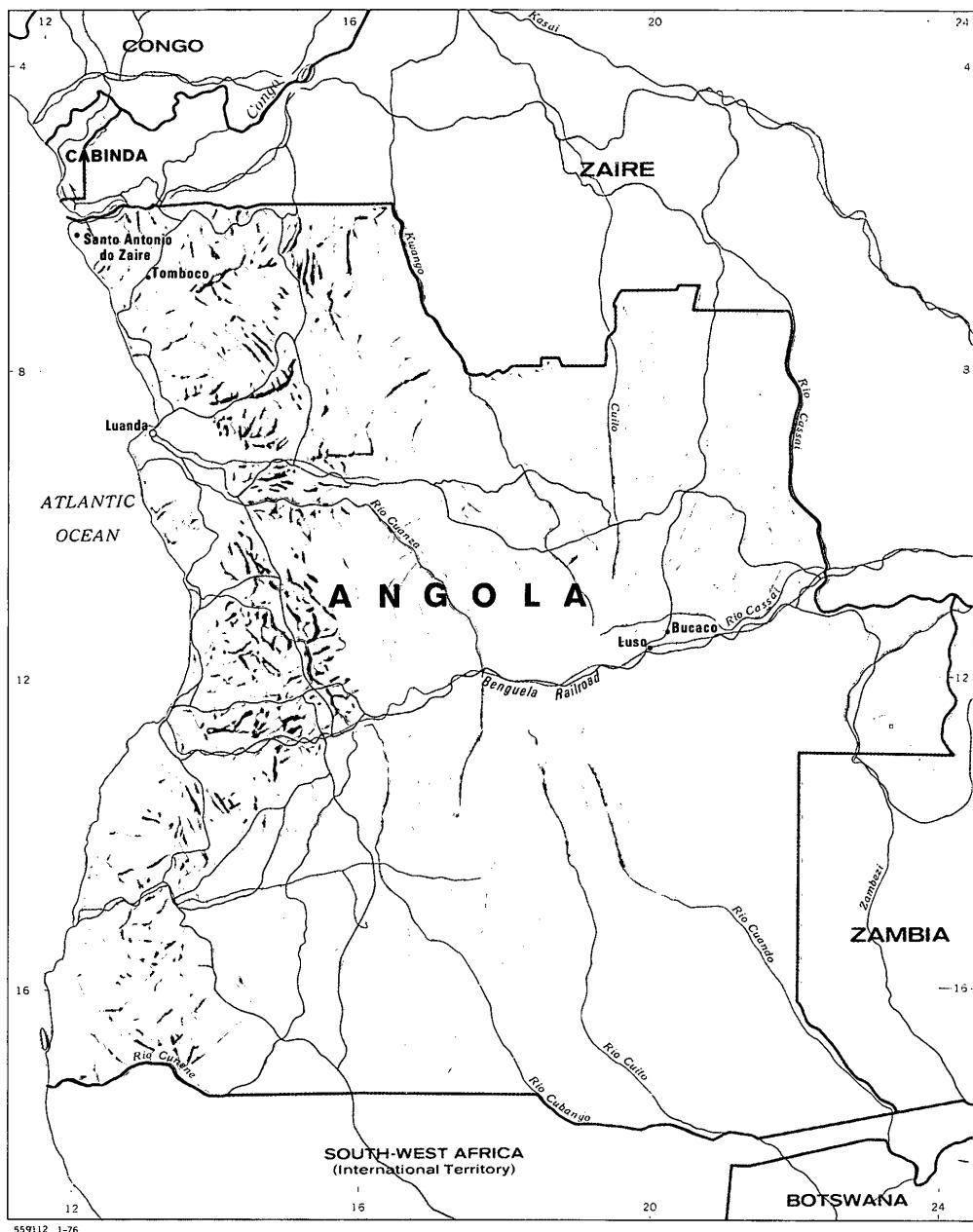
Angola: The National Front's military position continues to deteriorate in the north as Popular Movement forces, backed by Cubans, move up the coast. (Page 1)

Lebanon: Maronite Christian leaders reportedly have given President Franjiyah a free hand to negotiate further with Syrian President Asad. (Page 3)

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ANGOLA

The Popular Movement, aided by Cuban troops, is continuing its advance northward.

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A Movement force spearheaded by a battalion of Cuban troops is moving on Tomboco [redacted] Another force is pushing toward Santo Antonio do Zaire, the National Front's last remaining stronghold in the north. Any further retreat by the Front will bring the Popular Movement to the Zairian border.

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Morale among Front and Zairian troops in northern Angola is at an all-time low. [redacted] the Zairian troops are pillaging as they withdraw. The Front would like to see the Zairian troops go home, but Zairian President Mobutu apparently refuses to allow them to return,

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With the virtual collapse of the Front's defensive posture in the north, the Popular Movement may soon divert the bulk of its resources toward operations targeted southward from its present positions in central Angola.

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In the east, where there has been little action for some time, a Popular Movement attack on Bucaco on Monday reportedly was repulsed by National Union forces based in Luso.

We have no information to indicate that South African troops have resumed their support for the National Union's operations. The South Africans stood down prior to the OAU summit on Angola and seemed to be on the verge of withdrawing. They escaped official condemnation at the OAU meeting when no resolutions were adopted.

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[redacted] small-scale fighting has flared up again in Cabinda, apparently involving a small detachment of Zairian troops and Cabindan separatists left behind after the abortive Zairian-led invasion of the enclave last November. The fighting apparently is not a prelude to another invasion, and can probably be put down rather easily by the several thousand Movement and Cuban troops there.

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The status of Soviet ships possibly associated with the situation in Angola has changed little since yesterday morning.

The most significant change has been the return of the Kotlin-class destroyer to Conakry, Guinea, from the Gulf of Guinea. The Soviet landing ship and a naval oiler, however, continue to linger about 200 miles southwest of Abidjan, Ivory Coast. The Kresta-II-class cruiser remains in Conakry, and the Sverdlov cruiser and Kashin-class destroyer are still near the Strait of Gibraltar.

The presence of the two Soviet warships near the Strait may reflect concern over the future movement of a US carrier group now en route to the Mediterranean. This group--led by the USS Saratoga--will soon relieve the carrier Kennedy and its accompanying ships. The Soviets may suspect that one or both groups will move to Angolan waters.

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[redacted]

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[redacted]

LEBANON

Maronite Christian leaders reportedly have given President Franjiyah a free hand to negotiate further with President Asad on the five-point peace program proposed by Syria last month. Asad and Franjiyah are expected to meet this weekend.

A communiqué issued by the Christians on Tuesday following a series of meetings with Franjiyah suggests the President will take a hard line on the Palestinian issue, but may be somewhat more flexible on Muslim political demands. The Christians are said to have decided that Palestinian interference in Lebanese affairs, not the Muslims' demands, is the central issue.

Any hint of flexibility on the part of the Christians, however, is almost certainly tactical. Their blockade of three Palestinian refugee camps has given them a temporary negotiating advantage which Franjiyah will press in his talks with Asad. Franjiyah probably will attempt to show some compromise on political reform in an attempt to dissuade Syria from allowing increased numbers of Palestinians to enter his country.

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[redacted] a Saqiya company has been moved from Damascus to Beirut, and elements of another Saqiya battalion previously located in Syria have been noted operating in Lebanon. Some of these units apparently were headed toward the Dibayah refugee camp before it fell into Christian hands.

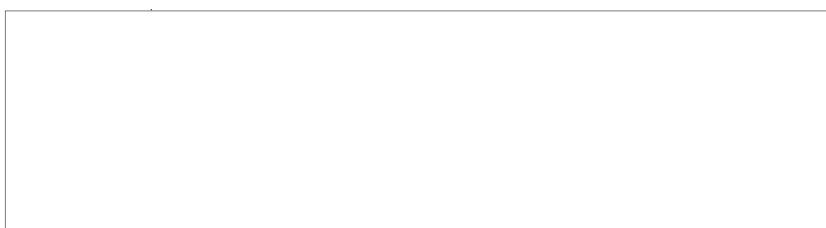
Palestinian chief Yasir Arafat claimed yesterday that the Lebanese army had aided the Christian militiamen in taking the camp. The Palestinians in the past have exaggerated the army's involvement in the fighting, but there is growing evidence that elements of the army are in fact siding with the Christians.

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Fighting in the capital remains heavy, but
neither side has made any significant advances.

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The Spanish government is adopting sterner control measures against spreading strikes and labor violence.

More than 200,000 workers are now idle; work stoppages are concentrated in but not limited to Madrid. The strikes began over wage demands but have become politicized as demonstrators protest police tactics and demand amnesty for political prisoners.

The Interior and Justice ministers--both of whom have been leading proponents of reform--have publicly warned that subversion and politically motivated strikes will not be tolerated. Striking postal workers have been placed under military control, thereby making them liable to military discipline. Although more liberal strike regulations are reportedly being considered, the deteriorating labor situation makes it difficult for the government to resist rightist pressures against reform.

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The Portuguese government has announced that it is setting up machinery for the national elections scheduled to be held no later than April 25, and that informal campaigning by the political parties can now begin.

The degree of civilian control of the future government and the timetable for ending the military's political domination are presently being negotiated by the Revolutionary Council and the political parties. Press reports from Lisbon yesterday and comments by the leader of the Social Democratic Center appeared to confirm that the Council is seeking to retain its position as the supreme ruling body.

The Social Democratic Center is opposed to a continued role for the military, and its view probably is shared not only by Popular Democratic leaders and some Socialists, but also by an influential group of "professional" officers on the Revolutionary Council itself. These differences may be worked out when the military officers and civilian politicians get down to face-to-face negotiations.

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